PUBLIC LEDGER.

By E. WHITMORE. LARGEST CITY CIRCULATION. Fifteen Cents Per Week

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PUBLIC LEDGER.

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Weekly Public Ledger,

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Communications upon subjects of general interest to the public are at all times acceptable.

Rejected manuscripts WILL NOT be returned.

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E. WHITMORE,
Publisher and Proprietor.

WITHOUT THE CHILDREN.

O the weary, solemn silence
Of a house without the children!
O the strange, oppressive stillness
Where the children come no more!
Oh the longing of the sleepless
For the soft arms of the children;
Ah! the longing for the faces
Peeping through the open door—
Faces gone for evermore!

Strange it is to wake at midnight,
And not hear the children breathing;
Nothing but the old clock ticking,
Ticking, ticking, by the door.
Strange to see the little dresses
Hanging up there all the morning;
And the gaiters—ah! their patter,
We will hear it never more
On our hearth-forsaken floor.

What is home without the children?
'Tis the earth without its verdure,
And the sky without the sunshine,
Life is withered to the core!
So we'll leave this dreary desert,
And we'll follow the Good Shepherd
To the greener pastures vernal,
Where the Lambs have "gone before"
With the Shepherd evermore!

THE LAW OF KINDNESS.

The Old Woman's Railway Signal.

BY ELIHU BURRITT.

The most effective working force in the world in which we live is the law of kindness—for it is the only moral force that operates with the same effect on mankind, beastkind, and birdkind. From time immemorial, music has wonderfully affected all beings, reasoning and unreasoning, that have ears to hear. The prettiest idea and simile of ancient literature relate to Orpheus playing his lyre to animals listening in intoxicated silence to its strains. Well, kindness is the spontaneous music of good will to men and beasts; and both listen to it with their hearts instead of their ears; and the hearts of both are affected by it in the same way, if not in the same degree. Volumes might be written filled with beautiful illustrations of its effects upon both. The music of kindness has not only the power to charm, but to transform both the savage heart of man and beast; and on this harp the smallest fingers in the world may play heaven's sweetest tunes on earth.

Some time ago we read of an incident that will serve as an illustration of this beautiful law. It was substantially to this effect: A poor, coarse featured old woman lived on the line of the Baltimore and Ohio railway, where it passes through a wild, unpeopled district of Western Virginia. She was a widow, with only one daughter, living with her in a log hut, near a deep, precipitous gorge, crossed by a railway bridge. Here she contrived to support themselves by raising and selling poultry and eggs, adding berries in their season, and other little articles for the market. She had to make a long, weary walk of many miles to a town where she could sell her basket of produce. The railway passed by her cabin to this town; but the ride would cost too much of the profits of her small sales, so she trudged on generally to the market on foot. The conductor came finally to notice her walking by the side of the line or between the rails, and being a good natured, benevolent man, he would often give her a ride to and fro without charge. The enginemen were also good to the old woman, and felt they were not wronging the interests of the railway company by giving her these free rides. And soon an accident occurred that proved that they were quite right in this view of the matter.

In the wild month of March, the rain descended and the mountains sent down their rolling, roaring torrents of melted snow and ice into this gorge near the old woman's hut. The flood arose with the darkness of the night, until she heard the crash of the railway bridge as it was swept from its abutments, and dashed its broken timbers against the craggy sides of the precipice on either side. It was nearly midnight. The rain fell in a flood, and the darkness was deep and howling with the storm. In another half hour the express train would be due. What could she do to warn it against the awful destruction it was approaching? She had hardly a whole tallow candle in her house; and no light she could make of tallow or oil, if she had it, would live a moment in that tempest of wind and rain. Not a moment was to be lost; and her thought was equal to the moment. She cut the cord of her only bedstead, and shouldered the dry posts, side pieces, and head piece. Her daughter followed her with their two wooden chairs. Up the steep embankment they climbed, and piled all their household furniture upon the line, a few rods before the black, awful chasm, gurging with the roaring flood. The distant rumbling of the train came upon them just as they had fired the well dried combustibles. The pile blazed up into the night, throwing its red, swaling, booming light a long way up the track. In fifteen minutes it would begin to wane, and she could not revive it with green, wet wood. The thunder of the train grew louder. It was within five miles of the fire. Would they see it in time? They might not put on the brakes soon enough. Awful thought! She tore her red flannel gown from her in a moment, and, tying it to the end of a stick, ran up the track, waving it in both hands, while her daughter swung round her head a blazing chair post a little before.

The lives of a hundred unconscious passengers hung on the issue of the next minute. The ground trembled at the old woman's feet. The great red eye of the engine burst upon her as it came round a curve. Like a huge, sharp-sighted lion coming suddenly upon a fire, it sent forth a thrilling roar, that filled all the wild heights and ravines around. The train was at full speed; but brakemen wrestled at their leverage with all the strength of desperation. The wheels ground along on the heated rails slower and slower, until the engine stopped at the decaying fire. It still blazed enough to show them the beetling edge of the black abyss into which the train and all its passengers would have plunged, and into a death and destruction too horrible to think of, had it not been for the old woman's signal. They did not stop to thank her first for the deliverance. The conductor knelt down by the side of the engine; the engine driver and the brakemen came and knelt down by him; all the passengers came and knelt down by them, and there, in the expiring light of the burnt out pile, in the rain and the wind, they thanked God for the salvation of their lives. All in a line the kneelers and prayers sent up into the dark heavens such a midnight voice of thanksgiving as seldom, if ever, ascended from the earth to Him who seeth in darkness as well as in secret.

Kindness is the music of good will to men; and on this harp the smallest figures may play Heaven's sweetest tunes on earth.

The Power of a Corporal.

The Weston Democrat relates the following story concerning Hon. J. M. Bennett, of that place, who was Auditor of the State of Virginia during the war:

On one occasion during the war, when provisions were worth almost their weight in gold in Richmond, and Confederate money at its lowest ebb, it was Mr. Bennett's custom to go to market early in the morning. On his return at the time we speak of, as he was wending his way home with about $300 or $400 worth of provisions in a little basket, a soldier with gun and bayonet, and "in battle array," marched hurriedly up to him, and slapping him on the shoulder, said: "Sir, I want you—you are conscripted into the army!"

"I reckon not," said Mr. Bennett. "I am not liable to military duty."

"I have heard that sort of talk before," said the soldier, "so on you go."

"But," said Mr. Bennett, "I am a State officer."

"You can't come that game over me. I've told you to go on; and if you don't, I'll touch you up with the bayonet."

"Well, take me to Governor Letcher."

"The devil take Governor Letcher."

"Then take me to General Breckinridge."

"I have nothing to do with him—so go on!"

"Well, take me to Jeff Davis, then."

"D—n Jeff Davis! Gen. Lee commands us fellers, and (making a threatening motion) if you don't go on I'll prick you up—that's all?"

There was no help for it, and Mr. Bennett trudged along. At last, seeing a lady of his acquaintance, he handed her his basket, with instructions to tell his family that they would find him at Castle Thunder. Just as they were passing Broad street theater, another soldier, bearing upon his arms the stripes of a corporal, happened to see them, and coming to the guard he said: "What are you doing? This is Mr. Bennett—a State officer—you can't take him."

"Oh! said the guard, "of course it's all right if you say so," and walked off, leaving his late prisoner at liberty.

Mr. Bennett then turned to the corporal, and, raising his hat, made a most profound bow. "Sir," said he, "you are the greatest man in the army! What Gov. Letcher, Gen. Breckinridge and Jeff Davis could not do, you did with all the ease in the world. I assure you that if I ever entered the army, I should make it a condition precedent that I should hold the office of corporal."

The Modern Sermon.

The Chicago Times hits off the sermons of the day as follows:

There is no doubt that preachers and sermons of the day may be divided into the secular and religious, with an increasing majority among the former. The time of old-fashioned exhortation, of doctrinal argument, of scriptural exposition, and of purely religious thought in the Sabbath day church exercise, is undoubtedly passing away. To review the life of the Savior of orthodoxy after the fashion of Renan, to speak of St. Paul as an insignificant Jew, as Beecher does, to award progress a higher place in religion than revelation, are the tendencies of the modern preacher. Instead of the religion thus displaced we have rhetorical considerations of the commercial, political and social aspects of the day.

There is reason to doubt very seriously whether this pulpit innovation is conducive to the spread and respect of religion. The success of the new school commercially has been well demonstrated. The church has been rendered more attractive to those who are best able to build magnificent temples and pay large salaries. The rich man, for whom it was once supposed to be as difficult to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, now goes in by wide, swinging doors; listens to a sermon which leaves no more disagreeable twinge of the conscience than would the discourse of any of the peripatetics of the day, pays for it as he would his box at the opera, enjoys the music and the display, and regards the whole affair as an appropriate and, on the whole, rather agreeable way of spending a small portion of the Sabbath. In the meantime, however, the masses who used to think of the Sunday service as of divine worship consecrated to the Lord, intended as a respite from worldly considerations, and the tittle due to Providence, are driven away from the churches and thrown upon individual resources of unadulterated piety, which is scarcely so self-sustaining as those little communities "where two or three are gathered together in My name."

THEORY VS. PRACTICE.

A Professor Deceived by the Momentum.

The Rev. Elijah Kellogg, in his capital story, "The Spark of Genius," relates this funny incident, and vouches for its truth:

The extent to which theory often fails in practice is furnished by a venerated professor, a most distinguished mathematician, whose works are still used as text-books in many of our institutions, and which occurred within the compass of our own experience.

He went to Bethel. On his return he spent the Sabbath at Lewiston. Monday morning he was told the horse was sick. Nevertheless, he started. The horse went a few rods, fell down, and broke both thills. He then sent his wife home, and also sent to Brunswick for another horse and carriage to take him and the broken chaise home.

When the driver came they lashed the two vehicles together and started. All went well till they came to the first long, steep hill between Lewiston and Brunswick; on its summit they held a consultation. The Professor had an exaggerated idea of his strength, and said, "Mr. Chandler, it is too much for the horse to hold these two carriages on this steep descent; take the horses out; I will get into the shafts."

"Professor," replied Chandler, "the breeching is strong, and so is the armgirth."

"But the horse, Mr. Chandler. It is too much for the horse. Besides being strong, I know how to take advantage of the descent, and manage it much better than the horse."

"If the horse can't hold it, you can't."

"Do you, sir, intend to place me, in point of intelligence and knowledge of mechanical forces, below a horse? I have made mathematics the study of a lifetime."

"I have no intention to be disrespectful, sir, but I know that a horse understands his own business (which is handling a load on a hill) better than all the professors in the United States. I was sent up here by my employer, who confides in me to take care of his property. If you will take the business out of my hands, and be horse yourself, you must be answerable for the consequences."

The professor had a habit, when a little excited, of giving a nervous twitch at the lappel of his coat with his right hand.

"I," he replied, with a most emphatic twitch, "assume all responsibility."

The driver, in reality nothing loth to witness the operation, took out the horse and held him by the bridle; and the professor, getting into the shafts, took hold of them at the ends. The forward carriage was just descending the hill, and the hinder one a little over the summit, when the professor trod upon a rolling stone, which caused him to plunge forward, and increased the velocity of his load so much that he was forced to walk faster than he desired, and exchange the slanting position—with his shoulders thrown well back, and his feet braced—which he had at first adopted, for a perpendicular one. At length he was pushed into a run; the carriages were going at a fearful rate.

At the bottom of the hill was a brook, on each side precipitous banks. The professor was between Scylla and Charybdis, going nine feet at a leap. In order to cramp the forward wheel, he turned suddenly to the right. The shafts of the forward carriage went two feet into the bank, breaking both of them short off; the lashings of the hinder one slipped; it ran into the forward one, breaking the fender, and both vehicles turned over at the bottom of the hill with a tremendous crash, the learned gentleman describing a parabola—one of his favorite figures—and landing some rods away. He rose from the earth a dirtier and wiser man; knees skinned, pants torn, a piece of skin knocked off his forehead, and his best hat flat as a pancake, underneath the hind carriage, and looking round about him exclaimed:

"Is it possible I could have been so much deceived as to the momentum? It was prodigious?"

"I don't know anything about momentum," exclaimed Chandler, "but I know something about horses. I know it makes a mighty difference about holding back a load on a steep hill whether the horse has two legs or four, and whether he weighs a hundred and seventy-five or twelve hundred pounds."

It cost the Professor thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents to ascertain how much horse-power he represented.

The Dowry of the Princess Louise.

Although there has been no little opposition in England lately to the practice of supporting the scions of royalty, and a strong pressure was brought to bear against the granting of a dowry to the Princess Louise, soon to marry the Marquis of Lorne, custom has triumphed, and Republican ideas in England have met with another rebuff. The House of Commons recently unanimously voted to the Princess £30,000 as a dowry, with an annual allowance of £6000.

When Queen Victoria surrendered the crown lands, with the exception of the Duchy of Lancaster, reserved to herself, and the Duchy of Cornwall, assigned to the Prince of Wales, she received in return a civil list fixed at £385,000. The lands thus surrendered yield a surplus of some £60,000, after paying the civil list, not including the grants to the Prince of Wales, his brothers and sisters, and the Cambridge family, which, with the revenue of the two duchies, bring the total expenditure on the royal family up to £582,000. Three children of the Queen, besides Princess Louise, have yet to be added to the pension list, Prince Arthur, Prince Leopold and Princess Beatrice, and if the ordinary precedents are followed, these new grants will soon swell the expenditure on this account to £600,000 a year, exclusive of the sum paid in lump on marriages, and the salaries as rangers of royal parks, colonels of regiments, etc.

A Child Not Four Years Old a Habitual Smoker.

From the Providence Herald.]

It is stated, on what is claimed to be reliable authority, that there is a child now in Bristol, four years of age, that is a habitual smoker, and, incredible as it may seem, who has been addicted to the habit for three years and nine months. When the little fellow was only three months old he held out his hand and cried for his father's pipe. The stem of the pipe was held to its mouth, when it took a few whiffs of the smoke and was made sick for a few minutes. The baby was, as we learn, afflicted with asthma, which was greatly relieved by the tobacco smoke, and no bad effects from the child's smoking have ever been observed, except in the first trial as mentioned above, and he has smoked almost daily ever since. He usually uses a pipe filled with common smoking tobacco, but will puff away at a cigar equal to any older inveterate smoker. Residents of Bristol who have often seen the youthful smoker "blowing a quiet cloud," vouch for the truth of this singular story. Our Western cotemporaries frequently print astonishing narratives of precocious children, but we doubt their ability to trot out anything that will "lay over" this scion of antiquated Bristol. If they can we shall be pleased to hear of it.

The Rev. John Brown courted a lady upward of six years, and was so singularly modest and bashful that he had never ventured to kiss her. One day it occurred to him that it would not be a bad thing to do. So, it is recorded, he said: "Jane, my woman, we've been acquainted now for six years, an'—an'—I've never got a kiss yet. D'ye think I may take one, my bonnie lass?" The reply was wonderfully characteristic of the Scottish maiden. "Just as ye like, John," said she, "*only be becomin' and proper wi' it.*" "Surely, Janet," said John, "we'll ask a blessin'." The blessing was asked, and the kiss exchanged. "O woman," said the enraptured but still devout minister, "O woman, but it was gude. We'll noo return thanks." And they did.